

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 L-02 PA-02 USIA-15 PRS-01 FMC-02

/049 W

----- 122935

R 101538Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7527

INFO AMCONSUL IBADAN

AMCONSUL KADUNA

UNCLAS LAGOS 00335

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EWWT, ELAB, NI

SUBJECT: PORT STRIKE OVER UDOJI

REF: (A) LAGOS 4528: (B) LAGOS 11829

SUMMARY: LAGOS DOCKS CLOSED BY STRIKE BEGINNING MORNING JANUARY 9. STRIKE CAUSED BY UNION DEMAND DOCKWORKERS BE CONSIDERED PART OF PUBLIC SECTOR AND THUS AUTOMATICALLY RECEIVE UDOJI WAGE SCALES. UNDERLYING CAUSE IS CONTINUATION INTRA-UNION LEADERSHIP BATTLE. END SUMMARY

1. FACTION OF LAGOS PORT DOCKWORKERS UNION LED BY LEFT-WING UNION LEADER BERNARD ODULANA INITIATED STRIKE ACTION MORNING JANUARY 9 WHICH HAS CLOSED APAPA PORT FACILITIES. UNION ACTION FOLLOWS END OF SEVEN-DAY ULTIMATUM THAT DOCKWORKERS BE CONSIDERED PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES AND THUS AUTOMATICALLY RECEIVE UDOJI WAGE SCALES. ODULANA REJECTS SUGGESTION THAT UNION NEGOTIATE WITH EMPLOYERS, NOTING THAT DURING PREVIOUS WAGE REVIEWS DOCKWORKERS WERE CONSIDERED PART OF PUBLIC SERVICE. AT PRESENT DOCKWORKERS, WHO WORK FOR PRIVATE CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH GOVERNMENT-OPERATED NIGERIA PORTS AUTHORITY, ARE CONSIDERED PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYEES AND THEREFORE NOT COVERED BY CIVIL UNCLASSIFIED

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SERVICE SALARY INCREASES.

2. DOCKWORKERS NOT ORIGINALLY ASSOCIATED WITH ODULANA FACTION HELD IMPROMPTU MEETING AFTER STRIKE BEGAN AND DECIDED NOT TO ATTEMPT TO WORK UNTIL ISSUE IS SETTLED, THEREBY LENDING SUPPORT TO STROKE. NORMAL PORT SERVICES ARE REPORTEDLY COMPLETELY HALTED, WHICH WILL ADD TO PRESENT PORT CONGESTION.

3. ACCORDING TO NEWSPAPER REPORTS THERE WERE NO INCIDENTS ON DOCKS, ALTHOUGH ARMED POLICE WERE CALLED IN TO DISPERSE STRIKERS WHO HAD BEEN BLOCKING DOCK ENTRANCES. ONE EYEWITNESS, HOWEVER, REPORTS POLICE AND ARMY USED CONSIDERABLE FORCE IN DISPERSING STRIKERS, AND SEVERAL PERSONS APPEARED INJURED. SUCH INCIDENTS, IF THEY OCCURRED, DO NOT APPEAR SUFFICIENT TO COMPLICATE NEGOTIATIONS.

4. COMMENT: DOCK STRIKE IS FIRST OVERT REACTION TO UDOJI REPORT BY WORKERS IN PRIVATE SECTOR. AS REPORTED DURING DOCK STRIKE LAST MAY (REFTEL A), ODULANA HAS BEEN SEEKING FMG RECOGNITION OF HIS LEADERSHIP CLAIM OVER DOCKWORKERS FOR SOME TIME. CURRENT STRIKE ACTION, WHICH JUST HAPPENS TO COINCIDE WITH OPENING OF NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN RECOGNIZED DOCK UNION LEADERS AND EMPLOYERS ON UDOJI ISSUE, APPEARS TO BE LATEST ATTEMPT BY ODULANA TO PUCH HIS CLAIM. HE HAS BEEN QUICK TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF CURRENT HIGH FEELINGS AMONG DOCKWORKERS ON UDOJI ISSUE, THUS EMBARRASSING FMG MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND RECOGNIZED DOCK UNION LEADERSHIP. FMG REACTION TO STRIKE COULD BE FIRST CLUE AS TO HOW FMG PLANS TO DEAL WITH ANY INDUSTRIAL UNREST EMANATING FROM UDOJI REPORT. AS REPORTED EARLIER, (REFTEL B), FMG HAS INDICATED IT WOULD TAKE STRONG ACTIONS AGAINST STRIKES, BUT IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN EXACTLY HOW FMG INTENDS TO HANDLE SITUATION.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: WAGES, LABOR DISPUTES, LABOR UNIONS, LONGSHOREMEN, LABOR STRIKES, LABOR UNION OFFICIALS, PORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LAGOS00335
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750011-0295
From: LAGOS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750162/aaaaccrx.tel
Line Count: 93
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 LAGOS 4528; 75 LAGOS 11829
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CollinP0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 31 MAR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <31 MAR 2003 by RicharJA>; APPROVED <13 FEB 2004 by CollinP0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PORT STRIKE OVER UDOJI
TAGS: EWWT, ELAB, NI, (ODULANA, BENARD)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006